



# DHS Matters!

Michigan Department of Human Services • Lansing, Michigan • November 6, 2008  
Produced by DHS Office of Communications, Suite 1510, Grand Tower, Lansing  
Submit stories by e-mail to [DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov](mailto:DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov)



## Class of 2008 Genesee County Department of Human Services

From Karen Ford, Foster Care Supervisor  
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The Genesee DHS Youth Outreach Unit (YOU) is a specialized unit that focuses on the needs of teens in foster care. YOU recently acknowledged 21 foster youths of the 2008 graduating class. On July 10, 2008, Genesee County DHS commenced its first annual graduation ceremony in the auditorium of Mott Children's Health Center.

The reception began with opening remarks from Karen Sugar-Smith, acting district manager from DHS, followed by keynote speaker David McGhee, program coordinator from Big Brothers and Big Sister of Greater Flint. In addition to Mr. McGhee, Referee Mary Hood of the Genesee County Family Court Division was a guest speaker at the event.

During the ceremony the graduates received praise and recognition for their accomplishments and were encouraged to succeed and pursue their dreams. The theme of the event – "What Your Mind Can Dream You Can Achieve" – emphasized the strength of character in these youths who are achieving success despite challenges.

The YOU staff and Child Advocacy Team presented tokens of appreciation in the form of college care packages to each graduate. Among the colleges the graduates will journey to this fall are Southwest Baptist University, Wayne State University and Baker Community College.

The event concluded with remarks from Karen Ford, Genesee DHS foster care supervisor, followed by cake and punch. The YOU is looking forward to organizing future events like these for foster care youth to ensure that their accomplishments do not go unrecognized.

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## Partnership Works!

***Van Buren DHS hosts employment and training job fair***

**From Sue McCauley, Community Resource Coordinator**

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The lobby was "bustling" much more than the average day at Van Buren DHS on the morning of Sept. 22. In an effort to help Van Buren's JET participants and other county residents overcome potential employment and training barriers, the management at DHS decided to host an Employment and Training Job Fair. After considerable consultation and support from the Van Buren Intermediate School District, this new venture began taking shape. We spread the word through flyers, postcards, and by personal contacts with employers and educators.

The fair was not intended to duplicate any of the other efforts by Michigan Works! but rather it was meant to target those JET participants who had been through the program two or three times and had not yet secured either employment or registered for continuing education or skills training.

The Employment and Training Fair offered nine different employers including Bronson Hospital, McDonalds, Village Market, Wal-Mart, Pizza Hut, Harding's Market, Community Mental Health, Road House Grill and Beacon Specialized Services. There were five education and training vendors present including Van Buren Intermediate School District, Lake Michigan College, Lake Michigan College M-Tech, Beacon Professional Staffing, and Michigan Quality Community Care.

During a three-hour time frame, 114 people participated in the fair and several secured employment as a result! Participants were able to complete employment applications, ask questions and get advice from employers, and set down to discuss potential educational and training opportunities with vendors.

And it didn't stop there; employers and vendors were asked to complete brief questionnaires for each participant that visited their booth. We forwarded employer feedback regarding appearance and preparedness to the participants. The information is being used to help clients gain knowledge and insight in areas that need to be strengthened as they continue seeking gainful employment or skills training.

Van Buren DHS has established a new and growing relationship with some of the employers and vendors who have voiced their support for future events. The fair was considered a huge success and the partnership with Van Buren Intermediate School District and employers certainly defines what a collaborative effort is all about.

## Genesee County celebrates Diversity Awareness Month

From Charlene Ellison, Diversity Program Coordinator

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October was Diversity Awareness Month and the Diversity Committee of Genesee County kicked off its celebration by having an international potluck luncheon on Oct. 9. The luncheon featured cuisine from around the world representing Jamaica, China, the Middle East and Mexico.

Our guest speaker was James Newsom, director of DHS Diversity Programs. Newsom discussed services offered by the diversity office including:

- Equal opportunity and employment regarding the complaint process.
- Diversity issues regarding language interpretation services.
- Reasonable accommodations for employees and the clients we serve.

He spoke specifically regarding employment and the behavioral based interviewing process. The discussion ended with a question and answer session and attendees left with a feeling of empowerment. Newsom advised the Genesee Diversity Program coordinator to reach out to other diversity committees in collaboration to keep diversity awareness strong throughout the state.



From left: **Longino Gonzales**, Genesee DHS acting director; **Stacie Bowens**, Genesee DHS acting deputy director; Diversity Committee members **Denise Fleming**, **Charlene Ellison**, Genesee diversity coordinator **Jennifer Dillard**, **Alma Sykes-Edwards**, **Khalilah Majied**, **Kimberlee La Fear**, **Melissa Baird** and **Francis Akakpo**; guest speaker **James Newsom**; and **James Flanagan**.

## September Day of Action in Michigan

Elyse Ver Berkmoes Walter, Communications Specialist  
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On Sept. 27, citizens across Michigan devoted part of their day to service projects on behalf of the ServiceNation



From left: Michigan Community Service Commission employees and friends **Nicole Campbell**, **Eric Sudal**, **Angelia Salas**, **Adam Walter**, **James Cody**, **Tony VanDam**, **Elyse Ver Berkmoes Walter**, **Mandy Paust**, **Paula Kaiser VanDam**, and **Musette Michael** dedicated a Saturday in September to service projects in Michigan.

campaign's national Day of Action. Among those that participated in a project were several Michigan Community Service Commission employees and friends who helped with maintenance and cleaning at the Loaves and Fishes Shelter in Lansing.

Specific projects for the day included painting, tree removal, window washing, gardening, and power washing. The commission was able to conduct the Day of Action with support by Capital Area United Way, which coordinated its annual Day of Caring on Saturday, Sept. 27 and provided volunteer opportunities and projects throughout the greater Lansing area.

Michigan Community Service Commission is administered

through DHS and builds a culture of service by providing vision and resources to strengthen communities through volunteerism. For more information go to [www.michigan.gov/mcsc](http://www.michigan.gov/mcsc)



## Here 'n there

Join Mentor Michigan in East Lansing on Nov. 17 for Michigan's third annual **Premier Mentoring Conference**.

You will have the opportunity to interact with leading authorities who will discuss best practices, quality enhancement, and other topics that will help you give our youth the very best mentoring programs available. Register today! Visit **Register Now!** [www.mentormichigan.org](http://www.mentormichigan.org) to download the registration brochure. The 2008 Mentor Michigan conference is sponsored by Mentor Michigan and the Michigan Community Service Commission in partnership with Michigan State University Extension.

Berrien County DHS is mourning the loss of retired employee **Jim McNees**, who died Oct. 4 from his battle with cancer. Jim worked for Berrien County DHS as a laborer. He retired in December 2007 serving the citizens of Berrien County for over 31 years. He was loved by all staff. He always had a smile and touched the lives of so many employees and customers in his years of service to the agency.

### Celebrating October events

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm proclaimed October as both **Child Support Month** and **Domestic Violence Awareness Month** in Michigan and proclaimed Oct. 30 **Weatherization Day** in Michigan and the DHS and partners held events for each.

On Oct. 21, the DHS and partners celebrated **Weatherization Day** with demonstrations of money-saving technologies. "With the price of heating oil and other heat sources, it's going to help the home residents with their heating bill and it's also good for the environment," Stacie Gibson, director of DHS Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity, said.

DHS sponsored an Oct. 23 media walk-through at the **Michigan State Disbursement Unit**, the site that manages more than \$5 million a day and relays \$1.5 billion in child support payments to parents all across Michigan. "The efficiency in terms of our customers getting their money quickly has gone forward by leaps and bounds," Marilyn Stephen, director of DHS Office of Child Support, said.

An Oct. 30 event marked the **30th anniversary of the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board**. District Court Judge Amy Krause, who chairs the board, hosted the event in her Lansing City Hall court room. "Our passion is great," she said. "Our dedication is tireless. Our collective spirit is unbreakable. Together we will continue moving full speed ahead toward the day when domestic and sexual violence is no longer a part of Michigan and its great people."

### Nov. 13 Poverty Summit

State employee registration for the summit is closed. You can follow events at the summit at they break next week by viewing the Poverty Summit Web site at [www.michigan.gov/poverty](http://www.michigan.gov/poverty). A blog of news stories will keep you advised of happenings during the day-long event.

Open enrollment to establish a **2009 Flexible Spending Account** runs through Dec. 1. Anyone wishing to participate in 2009 must enroll, even if you are enrolled this year. The accounts can offer special tax advantages. By contributing a portion of your pay into your account on a pre-tax basis, you can save 20-40 percent on the cost of eligible expenses, depending on your individual tax rate. Also, FSA contributions are exempt from federal income tax, Social Security taxes (FICA) and Michigan state income tax. This tax-exempt status is the mechanism that allows you to save money. Enrollment can be completed in your MI HR Self-Service account at [www.michigan.gov/selfserv](http://www.michigan.gov/selfserv). If you need assistance, please contact the MI HR Service Center at 877-766-6447 toll free, 517-335-0529, or 517-241-8046 TDD, Monday through Friday, 7 a.m.-6 p.m.

**One small step...sorting recyclable paper.** When it comes to recycling, most people want to do the right thing but there seems to be so much confusion as to what is the right thing. Not only does proper sorting extend the life of fiber and help the environment, it is also financially advantageous. In the Lansing area for the month of July 2008, the state was charged \$150 per ton for each pick up of paper to recycle. Once the paper was delivered to a recycling plant, rebates were issued back to the State based on the grade of paper. For mixed paper we received \$85 per ton. However, for sorted white paper we received \$310 per ton. The first step in helping the environment and reducing recycling costs in your building is to sort your discarded paper into five groups: **white office paper**, **mixed office paper**, **newspaper**, **corrugated paper/boxes** (also known as cardboard) and **trash** – any of the above contaminated by food or oil should be discarded in the trash. Placing your discarded paper into designated recycle bins is one small step that can make a huge difference.



**DHS Matters!** is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services  
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